

The opinion in support of the decision being entered today was **not** written for publication and is **not** binding precedent of the Board

Paper No. 24

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS
AND INTERFERENCES

Ex parte DAVID WATERS

Appeal No. 2000-1349
Application No. 08/475,026

ON BRIEF

Before MCCANDLISH, Senior Administrative Patent Judge,
FRANKFORT and MCQUADE, Administrative Patent Judges.

MCCANDLISH, Senior Administrative Patent Judge.

DECISION ON APPEAL

This is a decision on an appeal from the examiner's final rejection of claims 1 through 5, 7 through 10 and 15 through 20.¹

Appellant's invention relates to a vehicle having a frame (30), ground-engaging wheels (50) on the frame and a

¹ It does not appear that the examiner has appropriately dealt with amendment D (Paper No. 14) filed with the main brief on April 28, 1997. The record does not reflect the status of claims 23, 24, 34 and 35. Amendment D, however, has no bearing on the rejected claims under appeal.

pair of platforms (430, 432)² in the form of buckets for supporting workmen. The platforms are mounted on opposite sides of the frame by support structures. The support structures provide for the vertical and horizontal adjustment of the platforms to allow the workmen on the platforms to prune rows of trees on opposite sides of the vehicle.

Independent claim 15 recites a means for moving each platform in a "pure linear vertical direction and perpendicular with respect to the ground" and an additional means for moving each platform in a "pure linear horizontal direction perpendicular to the long axis [of the frame]." Claims 1 and 8, the only other independent claims on appeal, contain somewhat similar limitations.³ Claim 1 recites that the platforms are located at a "mid-portion"

² See Figures 15 and 16, which illustrate the elected species. In view of the election of the species in Figures 15-16, we fail to find any relevancy in appellant's discussion about the manner in which claim 1 is readable on the non-elected species of Figures 1-6 as set forth on pages 12 and 13 of the main brief.

³ In the first office action (Paper No. 3 mailed October 2, 1995) the examiner indicated that claims 1-5, 7, 15 and 16 were generic. However, as a result of amendments made subsequent to the first office action, claims 1 and 15 no longer read on the non-elected species of Figures 1-6. In the embodiment of Figures 1-6, the height adjustment of the platforms is not purely vertical as evidenced by the horizontal spacing of the platforms shown in Figure 3 of the drawings viz-a-viz that shown in Figure 1 of the drawings.

of the frame, claim 8 recites that the platforms are located at a "mid-section" of the frame, and claim 15 recites that the platforms are connected to a "mid-section" of the frame.

A copy of the appealed claims is appended to appellant's brief.

The following references are relied upon by the examiner as evidence of obviousness in support of his rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103:

Giladi	3,337,000	Aug. 22, 1967
Harrison	3,791,484	Feb. 12, 1974
Martin et al. (Martin)	4,546,852	Oct. 15, 1985
Kishi	5,107,955	Apr. 28, 1992
Louis Cepparo (French Patent Publication) ⁴	2,384,437	Oct. 20, 1978

The appealed claims stand rejected under § 103 as follows:

1. Claims 1, 15, 17 and 19 as unpatentable over Giladi in view of Cepparo;

2. Claims 1, 15 and 17-20 as unpatentable over Giladi in view of Martin;

3. Claims 2-5, 8-10 and 16 as unpatentable over Giladi in view of Cepparo and Kishi;

⁴An English translation of this reference is appended to this decision.

4. Claims 2-5, 8-10 and 16 as unpatentable over Giladi in view of Martin and Kishi;

5. Claim 7 as unpatentable over Giladi in view of Cepparo and Harrison; and

6. Claim 7 as unpatentable over Giladi in view of Martin and Harrison.

We have carefully considered the issues raised in this appeal together with the examiner's remarks and appellant's arguments in his main brief.⁵ As a result, we conclude that the rejection of claims 1 and 15 based on the combined teachings of Giladi and Cepparo is sustainable.

The Giladi patent discloses a wheeled vehicle having a pair of platforms (10) which are positioned on opposite sides of the vehicle. The platforms are adjustable to elevated positions as shown in the drawings for allowing workmen on the platforms to pick fruit as in an orchard. The platforms are mounted on the vehicle by pivotable linkage assemblies (32, 36) that provide for the vertical and horizontal adjustment of the platforms independently of each other to maneuver the platforms to desired locations.

⁵The examiner has refused entry of appellant's reply brief and the accompanying evidence of non-obviousness. Appellant's petition to overturn the examiner's refusal was denied (see Paper No. 21 mailed May 18, 2000).

In Giladi's illustrated embodiment, the vehicle appears to be in the form of an attachment to a tractor. However, in column 1, lines 53-58, Giladi expressly recognizes that as an alternative to the attachment embodiment, the illustrated apparatus may be a part of the self-propelled tractor itself. Tractors of the type disclosed in the Giladi patent conventionally have frames for mounting the various component parts of the vehicle.

Based on the foregoing analysis, claim 15 differs from Giladi by reciting the means for moving each platform in a pure vertical direction, by reciting the means for moving each platform in a pure horizontal direction perpendicular to the long axis of the frame and by reciting that the platforms are connected to a mid-portion of the frame. Similarly, claim 1 differs from Giladi by reciting the means for moving each platform purely vertically and purely horizontally perpendicularly to the frame's long axis, and by further reciting that the platforms are located on a mid-portion of the frame.

Giladi also lacks an express teaching of mounting the platforms and their adjusting structures on the frame of the tractor. However, such teaching is implicit in Giladi's disclosure to support the substantial loads

imposed by the platforms on the tractor. In any case, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to mount the platforms and their adjusting structures on the frame of the tractor in the instance where they are part of Giladi's self-propelled tractor, for the self-evident purpose of providing a firm support for the platforms.

Like the Giladi patent, the Cepparo reference discloses an agricultural tractor attachment having a pair of platforms 8 that are located on opposite sides of a vehicle frame as shown in Figure 4 for supporting workmen at elevated positions above the ground. As shown in Figure 4 of the Cepparo reference, each platform is connected to the frame by structures which provide for the adjustment of each frame in a pure horizontal direction and also in a pure vertical direction in a manner corresponding to that recited in claims 1 and 15. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to substitute Cepparo's vertical and horizontal platform adjustment structure as shown in Figure 4 of Cepparo for Giladi's compound platform adjustment structure for the self-evident purpose of simplifying the adjustment structure, the motion imparted to the platforms and also the controls for making the

vertical and horizontal adjustments. In the present case, the level of skill is demonstrated by the teachings of the cited references to be relatively high in the mechanical art.

Needless to say, we disagree with appellant's arguments on page 15 of the main brief about the lack of motivation for modifying Giladi's adjustment mechanism. The simplification of the adjustment structure, the motion imparted to the platforms by the adjustments and the controls for making the adjustments would have been ample motivation for one of ordinary skill in the art to utilize Cepparo's simplified adjustment structure in place of Giladi's compound adjustment structure.

With regard to appellant's arguments on page 15 of the main brief, appellant seems to raise questions about the difficulty in bodily incorporating Cepparo's adjustment structure into Giladi's vehicle. However, it is well settled that the test for obviousness is not whether features of one reference can be bodily incorporated in the structure of another reference. See In re Keller, 642 F. 2d 413, 425, 208 USPQ 871, 881 (CCPA 1981). Instead, the inquiry should be into the concepts fairly contained in the applied references to determine whether those concepts

would have suggested the modifications called for by the appealed claims. See In re Bascom, 230 F. 2d 612, 614, 109 USPQ 98, 100 (CCPA 1956).

With regard to the location where the platforms are connected to the frame, appellant has not taken issue with the examiner's position that the connection of the platforms to a mid-portion or mid-section of the frame would have been an obvious expedient to enhance stability of the vehicle as discussed on pages 3 and 4 of the examiner's answer. Instead, appellant is content with arguing that Giladi lacks a mid-section (see page 16 of the main brief) and, moreover, that "there is no basis in Giladi to assume the existence of a frame . . ." (main brief, page 14). We disagree.

As noted supra, we rely on Giladi's teaching that the platform and adjustment apparatus may be a part of the self-propelled tractor itself, and that such tractors conventionally incorporate a frame having a mid-section. As discussed supra, the concept of mounting the platforms and their adjusting structures on the frame of the Giladi's tractor is either implicit in Giladi's teachings or would have been obvious from those teachings. With regard to the location at which these component parts are mounted on the

tractor frame, the attributes of an even distribution of weight between the front wheels and the rear wheels of a motor vehicle are well known in the motor vehicle art to suggest the desirability of connecting the platforms to the mid-section of the tractor's frame.

In the paragraph bridging pages 13 and 14 of the main brief, appellant argues that his adjustment slides 106 are "equally displaced, balancing out any destabilizing torque" and further that the mid-portion of the frame is "lowered, improving stability."⁶ However, these features are not recited in claims 1 and 15. These structures, therefore, may not be relied on to support the patentability of claims 1 and 15 over the applied references. See In re Self, 671 F.2d 1344, 1350-1351, 213 USPQ 1, 5 (CCPA 1982) and In re Richards, 187 F.2d 643, 645, 89 USPQ 64, 66 (CCPA 1951).

With regard to the argument in the latter part of the paragraph bridging pages 13 and 14 of the main brief, claims 1 and 15 are not drafted in such a way to eliminate "rotary motion" of the platforms. With regard to appellant's argument about claim 15 in the first full paragraph on page 15 of the main brief, the recitation in the preamble of claim 15 is a statement of intended use and

⁶ Similar arguments are made on page 15 of the main brief.

thus is not germane to the patentability of claim 15. See Loctite Corp. v. Ultraseal Ltd. 781 F.2d 861, 868, 228 USPQ 90, 94 (Fed. Cir. 1985), In re Casey, 370 F.2d 576, 580, 152 USPQ 235, 238 (CCPA 1967) and In re Lemin, 326 F.2d 437, 440, 140 USPQ 273, 276 (CCPA 1964). With regard to the arguments commencing with the second full paragraph on page 15 of the main brief, the issue is what is claimed in claims 1 and 15, not what is described in appellant's summary of the invention and not what is described in the descriptive portion of appellant's specification. In any case, Giladi and Cepparo teach the concept of locating the platforms on opposite sides of the vehicle for the self-evident advantage of allowing workmen to work on trees on opposite sides of the vehicle. Furthermore, claims 1 and 15 are not limited to the specific concept of "simultaneous pruning" on opposite sides of the vehicle as argued on page 15 of the main brief.

In view of the foregoing, we are satisfied that the combined teachings of Giladi and Cepparo would have suggested the subject matter of claims 1 and 15 to one of ordinary skill in the art to warrant a conclusion of obviousness under the test set forth in Keller, 642 F.2d at 425, 208 USPQ at 881. Accordingly, we will sustain the

§ 103 rejection of claims 1 and 15 based on Giladi and Cepparo. We will also sustain the § 103 rejection of dependent claims 2, 3, and 16 based on Giladi in view of Cepparo and Kishi since the patentability of these dependent claims has not been argued separately of the claims from which they depend. See In re Nielson, 816 F.2d 1567, 1572, 2 USPQ2d 1525, 1528 (Fed. Cir. 1987) and In re Burckel, 592 F.2d 1175, 1178-79, 201 USPQ 67, 70 (CCPA 1979). Merely reiterating what each of these dependent claims recites (see pages 19-21 of the main brief) or stating that these dependent claims are considered to be patentably distinct from their parent claims (see pages 19-21 of the main brief) does not amount to an argument that these dependent claims are patentable separately of the claims from which they depend. With further regard to claim 3, appellant's assertion in the first paragraph on page 20 of the main brief that the platforms are linearly movable relates to claim 1, not claim 3. Accordingly, appellant has failed to separately argue the patentability of claims 2, 3 and 16 with any reasonable specificity. They therefore stand or fall with the claims from which they depend.

We will also sustain the § 103 rejection of dependent claim 7 based on Giladi in view of Cepparo and Harrison. Appellant's argument on page 22 of the main brief is not persuasive. One of ordinary skill in the art would have recognized from the teachings of Harrison that the common practice of lowering the mid-portion of the vehicle frame lowers the center of gravity in that region to enhance the stability of the vehicle. Skill in the art is presumed, not the converse. In re Sovish, 769 F.2d 738, 742, 226 USPQ 771, 774 (Fed. Cir. 1985).

With regard to the rejection of claim 4⁷ based on Giladi in view of Cepparo and Kishi, appellant argues on page 20 of the main brief that "[t]he final rejection does not explain how the Kishi joystick is to be incorporated in Cepparo" This argument is unpersuasive. In the first place, the issue is whether or not it would have been obvious to modify Giladi's apparatus in light of the teachings in Kishi. Moreover, as stated supra, the test for obviousness is not whether features of one reference can be bodily incorporated in the structure of another

⁷The recitation of "said platform" (in the singular) lacks strict antecedent basis inasmuch as parent claim 1 calls for a plurality of platforms. Consistent with appellant's specification, we have interpreted claim 4 to refer to at least one of the platforms recited in claim 1.

reference. See Keller, 642 F.2d at 425, 208 USPQ at 881. Instead, the inquiry should be into the concepts fairly contained in the applied references to determine whether those concepts would have suggested the modifications called for by the appealed claims. See Bascom, 230 F. 2d at 614, 109 USPQ at 100. In the present case, Kishi suggests the concept of locating a steering control in or on the platform for the self-evident purpose of conveniently allowing a worker to steer the vehicle from the platform (see, for example, column 6, lines 55-60 of the Kishi specification). Accordingly, we will sustain the rejection of claim 4 based on Giladi in view of Cepparo and Kishi.

We will also sustain the rejection of claim 8 based on Giladi in view of Cepparo and Kishi. With regard to this rejection, appellant argues on page 20 of the main brief that "the Giladi device requires rotary motion" whereas claim 8 "recites two platforms operated in opposed linear fashion to retain vehicle stability" The only other argument traversing this rejection of claim 8 is that "[t]he final rejection has not explained how the Cepparo, Martin and Kishi references modify the Giladi basic

reference to render claim 8 obvious" (main brief, pages 20-21). These arguments are not persuasive.

In the first place, claim 8 does not recite that the platforms are operated "in opposed linear fashion . . .". Instead, claim 8 calls for "a multiple of two platforms⁸ . . . oriented in balanced pairs in planes⁹ substantially perpendicular to said long axis . . .". This structural orientation is suggested by Cepparo. In particular, our findings and conclusions regarding the Giladi and Cepparo references as set forth supra with respect to the rejection of claims 1 and 15 are applicable here with respect to the rejection of claim 8 based on the combined teachings of Giladi, Cepparo and Kishi. Additionally, our findings and conclusions regarding the Kishi reference as set forth supra with regard to the rejection of claim 4 are also applicable here with respect to the rejection of claim 8 based on the

⁸ This limitation when read in light of appellant's specification, particularly the elected embodiment of Figures 15 and 16, is broad enough to read on just one pair of platforms, especially since the multiple may be the integer "1".

⁹ By definition, a "plane" is a merely dimensionless, imaginary facet. See Webster's Third New International Dictionary (G. & C. Merriam Company, 1971). Therefore, a three dimensional object, such as each of the claimed platforms, may lie along an imaginary plane, but not in the plane itself. Accordingly, we have interpreted this claim language to mean that the platforms lie along planes substantially perpendicular to the long axis of the vehicle.

combined teachings of Giladi, Cepparo and Kishi. Based on our analysis of the scope and content of the applied references, we concluded that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to substitute Cepparo's vertical and horizontal platform adjustment structure as shown in Figure 4 of Cepparo for Giladi's compound platform adjustment structure for the self-evident purpose of simplifying the adjustment structure, the motion imparted to the platforms and also the controls for making the vertical and horizontal adjustments. We also determined that Kishi would have suggested the concept of locating a steering control in or on the platform for the self-evident purpose of conveniently allowing a worker to steer the vehicle from the platform.

With regard to appellant's last argument supporting patentability of claim 8 as quoted supra, the rejection under discussion does not include Martin. Instead, it is based on the combined teachings of Giladi, Cepparo and Kishi. Furthermore, in his answer, the examiner has made detailed findings of the scope and content of these references and how he proposes to combine these references.

We will also sustain the rejection of dependent claims 9 and 10 based on Giladi in view of Cepparo and Kishi since

the patentability of these dependent claims has not been argued separately of the claims from which they depend. See Nielson, 816 F.2d at 1572, 2 USPQ2d at 1528 and Burckel, 592 F.2d at 1178-79, 201 USPQ at 70. Merely reiterating what each of these dependent claims recites (see page 20 of the main brief) or stating that these dependent claims are considered to patentably distinct from their parent claims (see page 20 of the main brief) does not amount to an argument that these dependent claims are patentable separately of the claims from which they depend.

We will not sustain the rejection of claim 19 based on Giladi in view of Cepparo. The "means to drive said vehicle" necessarily includes the vehicle's engine, and there is no teaching or suggestion in the applied references of including such a drive means in or on the platforms.¹⁰

In addition, we will not sustain (1) the rejection of claims 1, 15 and 17-20 based on Giladi in view of Martin, (2) the rejection of claims 2-5, 8-10 and 16 based on Giladi in view of Martin and Kishi and (3) the rejection of claim 7 based on Giladi in view of Martin and Harrison. The only way the examiner could have applied the teachings

¹⁰ Claim 19 is the subject of a new ground of rejection

of Martin to modify Giladi to meet the terms of independent claims 1, 8 and 15 and, consequently, dependent claims 2-5, 7, 9, 10 and 16 is through hindsight based on appellant's teachings. Hindsight analysis, however, is clearly improper. In re Deminski, 796 F.2d 436, 443, 230 USPQ 313, 316 (Fed. Cir. 1986).

For reasons set forth infra in our new ground of rejection introduced under 37 CFR § 1.196(b), it is not possible to apply the prior art to claims 5 and 17 without resorting to speculation and conjecture as to the meaning of certain limitations in these claims. Accordingly, we are constrained to reverse the rejection of claim 5 based on Giladi, Cepparo and Kishi and the rejection of claim 17 based on Giladi and Cepparo in light of the holdings in In re Steele, 305 F.2d 859, 862, 134 USPQ 292, 295 (CCPA 1962) and In re Wilson, 424 F.2d 1382, 1384, 165 USPQ 494, 496 (CCPA 1970). It should be understood, however, that our decision in this regard is based on indefiniteness of the claimed subject matter and thus does not reflect on the adequacy of the prior art applied in the rejection of these claims.

introduced infra pursuant to 37 CFR § 1.196(b).

Under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.196(b), the following new grounds of rejection are entered against claims 5, 17 and 19:

1. Claims 5 and 17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112 ¶2 as being indefinite and hence failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which appellant regards as his invention.

2. Claim 19 is rejected under the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. § 112 as being based on a specification which, as filed, does not satisfy the description requirement in that paragraph.

With regard to our new ground of rejection of dependent claim 5 under the second paragraph of § 112, our difficulty with the claim language centers on the recitation that the platforms are "restricted to a common plane . . ." It is not understood how the platforms can be "restricted" to such a plane.

Furthermore, it is not clear how the subject matter embraced by claim 5 is readable on the elected embodiment of Figures 15 and 16. In this embodiment, the platforms are longitudinally offset along the long axis of the frame so that they are vertically adjustable along parallel,

offset axes lying in offset vertical planes perpendicularly intersecting the long axis of the frame.

With regard to the new ground of rejection of claim 17, our difficulty with the language in this claim centers on the recitation that the platform motion is restricted to "common planes substantially perpendicular to said long axis and on opposite sides of said long axis, . . ." In the first place, the expression "common planes" (in the plural) is unclear. It is not understood how separate imaginary planes (which by definition are dimensionless) can be regarded as being "common." Customarily, when the word "common" is used as a modifier, the word "plane" is used in the singular. Furthermore, it is not understood how planes can be "common" and yet lie on opposite sides of the long axis of the frame.

Finally, it is not clear how claim 17 is readable on the elected embodiment of Figures 15 and 16. Reference is made to our foregoing discussion of the elected embodiment with regard to the new ground of rejection of claim 5 under the second paragraph of § 112.

With regard to the new ground of rejection of claim 19 under the first paragraph of § 112, there is no descriptive support in the original specification, including the

original claims, or the original drawings for a platform that includes a means to drive the vehicle. Such a drive means necessarily encompasses the engine of the vehicle. As a result, the disclosure in appellant's application as originally filed does not reasonably convey to the artisan that appellant had possession at that time of the subject matter now claimed in claim 19. Thus, with regard to this claim, the disclosure as originally filed does not satisfy the description requirement in the first paragraph of § 112. See In re Kaslow, 707 F.2d 1366, 1375, 217 USPQ 1089, 1096 (Fed. Cir. 1983).

In summary:

1. The examiner's decision to reject claims 1 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as unpatentable over Giladi in view of Cepparo is affirmed.
2. The examiner's decision to reject claims 17 and 19 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as unpatentable over Giladi in view of Cepparo is reversed.
3. The examiner's decision to reject claims 2-4, 8-10 and 16 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as unpatentable over Giladi in view of Cepparo and Kishi is affirmed.
4. The examiner's decision to reject claim 5 under

35 U.S.C. § 103 as unpatentable over Giladi in view of Cepparo and Kishi is reversed.

5. The examiner's decision to reject claim 7 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as unpatentable over Giladi in view of Cepparo and Harrison is affirmed.

6. The examiner's decision to reject claims 1, 15 and 17-20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as unpatentable over Giladi in view of Martin is reversed.

7. The examiner's decision to reject claims 2-5, 8-10 and 16 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as unpatentable over Giladi in view of Martin and Kishi is reversed.

8. The examiner's decision to reject claim 7 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as unpatentable over Giladi in view of Martin and Harrison is reversed.

In addition, new rejections of claims 5, 17 and 19 have been introduced pursuant to 37 CFR § 1.196(b).

In addition to affirming the examiner's rejection of one or more claims, this decision contains new grounds of rejection pursuant to 37 CFR § 1.196(b) (amended effective Dec. 1, 1997, by final rule notice, 62 Fed. Reg. 53,131, 53,197 (Oct. 10, 1997), 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. & Trademark Office 63, 122 (Oct. 21, 1997)). 37 CFR § 1.196(b)

provides, "[a] new ground of rejection shall not be considered final for purposes of judicial review."

Regarding any affirmed rejection, 37 CFR § 1.197(b) provides:

(b) Appellant may file a single request for rehearing within two months from the date of the original decision

37 CFR § 1.196(b) also provides that the appellant, WITHIN TWO MONTHS FROM THE DATE OF THE DECISION, must exercise one of the following two options with respect to the new grounds of rejection to avoid termination of proceedings (37 CFR § 1.197(c) as to the rejected claims:

(1) Submit an appropriate amendment of the claims so rejected or a showing of facts relating to the claims so rejected, or both, and have the matter reconsidered by the examiner, in which event the application will be remanded to the examiner

(2) Request that the application be reheard under § 1.197(b) by the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences upon the same record

Should the appellant elect to prosecute further before the Primary Examiner pursuant to 37 CFR § 1.196(b)(1), in order to preserve the right to seek review under 35 U.S.C. §§ 141 or 145 with respect to the affirmed rejections, the effective date of the affirmance is deferred until conclusion of the prosecution before the examiner unless, as a mere incident to the limited prosecution, the affirmed rejections are overcome.

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If the appellant elects prosecution before the examiner and this does not result in allowance of the application, abandonment or a second appeal, this case should be returned to the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences for final action on the affirmed rejections, including any timely request for reconsideration thereof.

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No time period for taking any subsequent action in
connection with this appeal may be extended under 37 CFR
§ 1.136(a).

AFFIRMED-IN-PART/37 CFR § 1.196(b)

HARRISON E. MCCANDLISH)	
Senior Administrative Patent Judge)	
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)	
)	BOARD OF PATENT
CHARLES E. FRANKFORT)	APPEALS AND
Administrative Patent Judge)	INTERFERENCES
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HEM/sld

Appeal No. 2000-1349
Application No. 08/475,026

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